



News from the Cultural Resources Management,
Tribal Liaison Office, & Environmental Programs of the
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs,
Alaska Army National Guard

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3rd Quarter 2011, September

Greetings,

This summer was particularly pleasant at the National Guard's headquarters at the Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson near Anchorage, but I enjoyed it all the more, because I was able to spend some time in several villages throughout the Y-K Delta and beyond out on St. Lawrence Island. I was fortunate to meet many elders, families, and youngsters. Everyone that I met shared a humble pride about their community, and I was made to feel very comfortable at work and play. I learned a great deal. The nights are getting longer, and the holidays will be here soon. We at the DMVA wish you the safest possible time and all the joy that comes with the season.

Veterans are Honored in Kwigillingok

General Katkus, the Adjutant General for the Alaska Army National Guard, hosted Senator Begich and U.S. Secretary of Veterans Administration General (ret.) Shinseki in Kwigillingok for Memorial Day, 2011. The Tundra Drums covered that event, and here are some excerpts from Victoria Barber's June 2nd article.

The dignitaries and their staff traveled by Blackhawk to the village of Kwigillingok, where they met with members of the Alaska Territorial Guard, and where they held a listening session with veterans.

"We're honored to have the Secretary here, on all the days of the year he works this is the probably the most important -- Memorial Day. To be here in Alaska, in Bethel, in Kwig, when he could have been just about anywhere in the country, is a great statement from his office to us," Begich said.

Shinseki is in charge of Department of Veterans Administration, which looks after the well-being of men and women after they leave active service. Shinseki was raised in Hawai'i, he has been a two-star general, and received two purple hearts in addition to other military honors.

Begich said he brought the Secretary out because he thought it was important for high-level members of government to see first hand what life is like in different parts of Alaska, from urban Anchorage, to a regional hub and villages -- what he called "extreme rural."

The two presented special coins and certificates to veterans and surviving members of the Alaska



Territorial Guard in Kwigillingok, and visited the local clinic to witness how health care is delivered in Alaska villages, where many veterans reside. When they arrived in Bethel they heard from veterans about their concerns, including how the VA addresses the issue of veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome returning to villages, or ionized radiation exposure amongst members of the Navy and Coast Guard.

Katie John Receives a PhD

Athabascan Elder Katie John received an honorary Doctorate of Laws Degree from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The Fairbanks Daily News reporter Julie Stricker wrote about that on May 14, 2011, and portions of her article follows. The 95-year-old Athabascan elder from Mentasta Lake, an icon in the Native Alaska community was honored at a reception by the Interior-Aleutians Campus.

“Great Britain has its queen, we have our Katie John,” said Bernice Joseph, vice chancellor of the College of Rural and Community Development.

John is known throughout the state as the person whose name is on a landmark subsistence case and for her advocacy of indigenous rights. She is a longtime teacher of culture and language and helped create the Ahtna alphabet. John, with her husband, Mentasta Traditional Chief Fred John, raised 14 children and six foster children. They have 211 grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren.



Dept. of Military and Veterans Affairs Employee: Scott Karner

Scott Karner, our new planner, is originally from Wisconsin and grew up in the Eau Claire area. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and in 1992 he received a Bachelor of Science degree in History and an Air Force ROTC commission. He served in the Air force as an Air Traffic Control and Airfield Operations Officer from 1993 until 2002. He was stationed at several lower 48 Air Force Bases as well at Fort Irwin, California, the US Army's National Training Center. He was then transferred to Elmendorf AFB in 1999. He also served overseas in Italy, Bosnia, and Kosovo during his time in the Air Force helping to carry out peacekeeping operations in that region of Europe.



Scott has worked for the State of Alaska since 2003 as a Planner for the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and an Emergency Management Specialist Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. He joined the DMVA FMO team in the Environmental Department as the department's planner in May of this year. His duties include the overseeing of the Master Plan for the Alcantra facility in Wasilla, updating facility databases, and coordinating sub-leases of the DMVA armories across the state. In his spare time he enjoys outdoor activities, working on his home, and also serves his community as a firefighter with the Central Mat-Su (Wasilla) Fire Department and member of the Mat Su HAZMAT team.

Scientists Learn from the Inuit

The Smithsonian Institution is bringing together scholars and Inuit representatives to share research results in the fields of archaeology, anthropology, linguistics, political governance, environmental science, health, education, and culture at a conference in Washington D.C. on October 24 through 28, 2011. The conference theme is intended to inspire discussion about important Inuit issues and how they impact the rest of the world. Sub-themes include: (1) Heritage, Museums, and the North; (2) Globalization: An Arctic Story; (3) Power, Governance, and Politics in the North; (4) The 'New' Arctic: Social, Cultural, and Climate Change; and (5) Inuit Education, Health, Language, and Literature. More information is available at <http://www.mnh.si.edu/arctic>.

Armory Spotlight: Eek

The new National Guard armory building in Eek, a village of 280 people living on the Eek River 12 miles east of the mouth of the Kuskokwim, was built in 2001 and is 30 by 50 feet. The older building was built in 1960 and is 20 by 60 feet. These prefabricated, steel frame structures are connected by an enclosed hallway.



The Squirrel in Alaska, by DMVA Environmental Program Specialist Shannon Fitzgerald

Among a sea of spread sheets, phone calls and office chatter the call came in on that fated Wednesday afternoon. It seems one red squirrel had set up shop in Hangar 6, among some valuable equipment, including the Army National Guard's prized Blackhawks. Our local NEPA guru and pest management person, Tim Shaw, was quickly contacted for rodent removal. The red squirrel, caught with a live trap, was to be re-homed in a more appropriate area on base.

The red squirrel, (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), can be found in spruce forests over most of Alaska and is considered a ubiquitous and chatty character in the field of wildlife biology. Typically 11 to 13 inches long, this small mammal occupies a wide range of forest habitat across the country. The red squirrel is a rusty-olive color on the upper region of its body with a whitish belly and underparts. Their bushy tail is often a lighter orange or red with white, light tipped hairs.

Usually solitary, the red squirrel pairs for mating in February and March and the females typically breed when they are 1 year old. After a gestation period of 36 to 40 days, 3 to 7 blind and hairless ¼ ounce wee ones emerge and remain with mom until almost adult size. The pressure is on, however, as the young must be ready to be independent during their first winter, so must gather and store the appropriate amount of food in advance. Red squirrels are active all year but may remain in a nest during severe weather conditions.

Much of the red squirrel's summer is spent cutting and storing bushels of cones stored in a cache which may attain a diameter of 15 to 18 feet and a depth of 3 feet! Interestingly, red squirrels may also be seen caching mushrooms on tree branches. From dusk to dawn, these little critters collect seeds, berries, buds, fungi and may even occasionally eat insects and bird eggs.

The home range of *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* is about ½ to 1 acre. Each squirrel has several nests in its territory and is seemingly aware, at all times, of its nearest retreat. Nests may be a hole in a tree trunk or a tightly constructed mass of twigs, leaves, mosses and lichens in the densest foliage of a tree (for weatherproofing). Ground burrows, or middens, are used mostly for food storage and one can usually find one large active den in each territory, as well as one auxiliary midden.

The midden is a site of interesting behavior for the red squirrel. These highly prized hideaways may be bequeathed to one of the offspring, dramatically improving the youngster's chances for survival. Young life is tough for a little squirrel! Even more alarming, some females will try to take over neighboring cone middens even before they have young, just so that they can pass prized seed piles on to their young. Dr. Stanley Boutin of the University of Alberta likens this behavior to "putting away money for your kid's university education even before you planned on having kids."

In fact, Dr. Boutin's squirrel team is looking at other interesting squirrel biology, including evolutionary modification due to climate change. It seems these little tree-nesting animals are breeding in the north about 18 days earlier than they did 10 years ago. He and his team have had the privilege of working with over 4,000 individuals, across 3 generations and whether or not one believes in global climate change, these red squirrels have adapted to an increase in local temperature, particularly during the spring season. Boutin thinks this warming trend is driving the earlier birth dates, primarily due to the food sources available.

It seems many people over the years have been fascinated by these little forest dwellers with lots of personality, including William Butler Yeats. He wrote the following poem inspired by a squirrel in a wooded area near Galway, Ireland, a town I had the pleasure of living in for some time. Hopefully our re-homed red squirrel found its way within a new set of real estate.

To a Squirrel at Kyle-Na-no
by William Butler Yeats
Come play with me;
Why should you run
Through the shaking tree
As though I'd a gun
To strike you dead?
When all I would do
Is to scratch your head
And let you go.

Working Hard to Keep the Land Clean

The Alaska Army National Guard was busy this summer working with several local companies to look closely at the land under many of its armories. Bethel Services, Inc. (a subsidiary of Bethel Native Corporation) was out at nine locations interviewing locals and veterans to find out how their training may have resulted in impacts to the land. Then they went out into the field to check that out. CH2MHill spent time at 21 armories augering

and drilling to try to determine if there is any contamination of soils. Ahtna Engineering (a subsidiary of Ahtna Corporation) removed contaminated soils at Akiachak, Newtok, and Hooper Bay armories. Those soils were barged out to the mainland for disposal. They replaced those soils with clean fill.

The engineering firms are analyzing the results of their work, and they will provide the Alaska Army National Guard with reports of their findings early in 2012. We will distribute the findings and reports to those communities where the work was conducted. More investigations or field work may be planned for the future.

We made lots of friends out in the villages this summer, and thank these 33 communities that were involved, and thank you for your support and assistance in all aspects of this project.



Our pals in Tununak

Communication Links

What are your preferred methods of contact?	<input type="radio"/> Letter	<input type="radio"/> Fax	<input type="radio"/> Email	<input type="radio"/> Telephone
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Offices

Mailing address		
Primary email		
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 40%; padding: 5px;">Phone number(s)</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">Fax number</td> </tr> </table>	Phone number(s)	Fax number
Phone number(s)	Fax number	

Do you have other staff that you would like us to include in our consultation for environmental and cultural issues?

Office	Name and contact information
Tribal Administrator	
Environmental Coordinator	
Realty	
Elders Office	
Other	

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